

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 LONDON 05823 071715Z
ACTION SS-25

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O P 071640Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2496
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY GABORONE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

S E C R E T LONDON 05823

EXDIS

FOR EMBASSY CAPE TOWN

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, RH, UK
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: CABINET GUIDANCE TO OWEN

1. EMBASSY OFFICER SAW PHILIP MANSFIELD APRIL 7 FOLLOW-
ING CONSIDERATION OF THE FOREIGN SECRETARY'S RHODESIA
BRIEF BY HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES. OWEN IS NOW AUTHORIZED
TO PROCEED TO AFRICA IN ORDER TO EXPLORE WITH LEADERS
THERE WHETHER A BASIS EXISTS FOR RELAUNCHING A RHODESIA
CONFERENCE, WHICH WOULD INCLUDE ALL THE PARTIES AS-
SEMBLED IN GENEVA, TO CONSIDER AN INDEPENDENCE CONSTITU-
TION. MINISTERS WERE ENCOURAGED BY OWEN'S REPORT OF
STRONG U.S. SUPPORT FOR THE U.K. INITIATIVE.

2. OWEN IS ALSO AUTHORIZED TO VISIT RHODESIA AND WILL
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LIKELY GO TO SALISBURY APRIL 15-16 UNLESS HIS RECEPTION
BY SMITH IN CAPE TOWN IS "EXCEPTIONALLY FROSTY."

3. OWEN DID NOT WIN APPROVAL FROM THE CABINET TO PUSH
AHEAD WITH A CONFERENCE IF SMITH ALONE REJECTS THE
CONCEPT OR ATTACHES CONDITIONS. HIS COLLEAGUES WILL
WANT TO RECONSIDER AFTER THE TRIP WHETHER IT IS

ADVISABLE TO PROCEED WITH A NATIONALISTS-ONLY CONFERENCE.

4. THE FCO IS PREPARING A MESSAGE FROM OWEN TO THE SECRETARY EXPLAINING THE ABOVE. THE DRAFT MESSAGE ALSO ASKS THAT AMBASSADOR BOWDLER BE AUTHORIZED TO SEE VORSTER THE DAY BEFORE OWEN'S ARRIVAL IN CAPE TOWN TO STRESS THAT THE U.S. FULLY ENDORSES OWEN'S INITIATIVE. THE OBJECT, MANSFIELD EXPLAINED, IS TO UNDERSCORE THE MEASURE OF OWEN-VANCE AGREEMENT WITHOUT GIVING THE IMPRESSION THAT THE UK PLAN IS ON A TAKE-IT-OR-LEAVE-IT BASIS.

5. COMMENT: OWEN'S SENSE OF URGENCY ON RHODESIA HAS RUN INTO THE CABINET'S SENSE OF CAUTION. HE DOES NOT NOW HAVE THE FLEXIBILITY TO LOOK AT OTHER COMBINATIONS OF CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION BEYOND THE GENEVA FORMULA, AT LEAST NOT WITHOUT HAVING TO GO BACK TO THE CABINET. WHILE HE RECOGNIZES THE DANGERS OF A NATIONALISTS-ONLY ARRANGEMENT, OWEN IS PRESENTLY STUCK WITH WHAT HE MOST WANTED TO AVOID IN THE PROCESS, I.E., A SMITH VETO. AND THIS IN TURN IS LIKELY TO TAKE SOME OF THE LUSTER OFF HIS PRESENTATIONS IN FRONT LINE CAPITALS. TO GUARD HIS OWN CREDIBILITY AND MOMENTUM, OWEN NOW MUST PROCEED MORE CAREFULLY SO THAT HE DOES NOT REPEAT THE IVOR RICHARD PERFORMANCE WITH A LAST ACT IN SALISBURY AND EGG ON HIS FACE.
MILLER

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Message Attributes

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